

STATINTL

Fulbright Sees U.S. Blunder in Santo Domingo

Inflated Estimates Of Reds Blamed for Intervention Policy

By CECIL HOLLAND
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Sen. J. William Fulbright, D-Ark., charged today that United States intervention in the Dominican Republic revolt was "a grievous mistake" and was characterized by "a lack of candor."

"The danger to American lives," he said in a Senate speech, "was more the pretext than a reason for the massive U.S. intervention . . ."

The real reason, he added, was fear of a Communist takeover of that country and that decision, he said, was based on misinformation and "on exaggerated estimates of Communist influence in the rebel movement."

Questions U.S. Premise

Fulbright, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said the administration acted on the premise that the revolution was controlled by Communists—"a premise which

it failed to establish at the time and has not established since."

He placed the blame for the failure of American police in the Dominican crisis on Ambassador W. Tapley Bennett Jr., and other American representatives who advised President Johnson on events there.

Int three critical days between April 25 and April 28, Fulbright said, officials sent the President exaggerated reports on the danger of a Communist takeover in Santo Domingo and, on the basis of these, recommended military intervention.

"It is not at all difficult to understand why, on the basis of such faulty advice, the President made the decisions that he made," Fulbright said.

Charges Exaggeration

The Senator cited what he described as "widely exaggerated reports of massacres and atrocities" by the rebel forces. He noted that the President, in a June 14 press conference, said that "some 1,500 innocent people were murdered and shot, and their heads cut off."

"There is no evidence to support this statement," the Senator said.

Fulbright said he was discussing this country's role in the that the mistakes that were made by the United States can be corrected and that it will be Dominican crisis in the hope possible to avoid them in the future.

"United States policy in the Dominican crisis," Fulbright said, "was characterized initially by over timidity and subsequently by over reaction. Throughout the whole affair, it

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has also been characterized by a lack of candor."

Sees No Easy Choice

Fulbright said he had made a painstaking review of the situation, but conceded his judgments were made with the benefit of hindsight. In fairness, he added, it must be conceded that there were no easy choices available to the United States.

"Nonetheless," he said, "it is the task of the diplomacy to make wise decisions when they need to be made and U.S. diplomacy failed to do so in the Dominican crisis."

Fulbright said that the United States might not have changed the course of events there by acting differently. But, he added, it could be said with assurance that the United States did not take advantage of several opportunities in which it might have changed the course of events.

Wary of Bosch

"The reason appears to be," Fulbright said, "that, very close to the beginning of the revolution, U.S. policy makers decided that it should not be allowed to succeed."

"This decision seems to have been based on exaggerated estimates of Communist influence in the rebel movement and on distaste for the return to power of Juan Bosch or a government controlled by Bosch's party, the PRD (Dominican Revolutionary Party)."

Fulbright said he was raising questions and not offering an answer regarding this country's policy toward Bosch and the return to power of his party. He added that the question involves what will be the administration's attitude toward reform movements in other Latin American countries.

Must Avoid Corruption

"It is of great importance that the uncertainty as to U.S. aims in Latin America be resolved," Fulbright said. "We cannot successfully advance the cause of popular democracy and at the same time align ourselves with corrupt and reactionary oligarchies; yet that is what we seem to be trying to do."

Fulbright noted that every revolutionary movement is likely to attract Communist support, at least in the beginning, and the approach followed in the Dominican Republic, if pursued, "must inevitably make us the enemy of all revolutions and therefore the ally of all the chiefs of the hemisphere."

"We simply cannot have it both ways," he added. "We must choose between the Alliance for Progress and a foredoomed effort to sustain the status quo in Latin America."

In some respects, Fulbright said, the Dominican story "acquired some of the inevitability of a Greek tragedy."

When the revolution began, the Senator pointed out, the United States had three options:

It could have supported the Reid Cabral government; it could have supported the revolutionary forces, or it could do nothing.

The administration, he said, chose to do nothing.

The next crucial point came on April 27, Fulbright said, when Ambassador Bennett rejected an appeal by rebel leaders to mediate and seek a cease fire, on grounds that this would have been intervention.

"Mediation at that point might have been accomplished quietly and peacefully," Fulbright said. "Twenty-four hours later the Ambassador was pleading for the Marines, and ever since the United States has been intervening up to its eyebrows."

He blamed this mistake on the feeling of officials there on the basis of evidence which was fragmentary at best that the rebels were dominated by Communists. He pointed out that the situation rapidly deteriorated and that the head of a military junta, which had been assembled, was told that the U.S. would not intervene unless it was to protect American lives.

Pretext Is Charged

That was eventually done on such a pretext, Fulbright said.

"In fact, no American lives were lost in Santo Domingo until the Marines began exchanging fire with the rebels after April 28; reports of widespread shooting that endangered American lives turned out to be greatly exaggerated."

Fulbright said the United States would have been justified in landing a small force for the express purpose of removing U.S. citizens and other foreigners, and then withdrawing such a force when it had completed its mission.

"Intervention on the basis of Communist participation as distinguished from the control of the Dominican revolution was a mistake of panic and timidity which also reflects a grievous misreading of the temper of contemporary Latin American

"Communists are present in all Latin American countries, and they are going to inject themselves into almost any Latin American revolution and try to seize control of it."

Helped Build Junta

The Senator said from the time the Reid government resigned, U.S. policy was directed toward the construction of a military junta and against the return of Bosch and the success of the rebel movement.

"One is led, therefore, to the conclusion that U.S. policymakers were unduly timid and alarmist in refusing to gamble on the forces of reform and social change," Fulbright said.

"The bitter irony of such timidity is that by casting its lot with the forces of the status quo ... the United States almost certainly helped the Communists to acquire converts whom they otherwise could not have won."

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